

MONTANAN

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Libby needs a technical assistance grant

Editor:

At the last CAG [Community Advisory Group] meeting, I requested to know if anyone on the CAG was pursuing the Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) being offered to our community through EPA. The response was no. I believe I indicated that my feeling was that the Community Advisory Group should try to secure this grant.

The question was raised as to why do we even need a Technical Assistance Grant. I will assume that this question was raised because of the fact that we have EPA on scene and these good folks have presented as being honest, competent and caring professionals. I, too, share this sense of security that we are in good hands, and I consider some of these folks from Region 8 and Washington, D.C., EPA to be true American patriots.

That said, I recall that in the

past two years, I have become concerned on several occasions, that this team from Region 8 EPA would be replaced here, due to political and corporate pressures. I believe that community support for this EPA team has overridden these pressures.

I have come to understand that we too are a part of this team and that it is input from this community that will enable EPA to do the job right. We have two choices: Go with the flow, be complacent and let the chips fall where they may, or the proactive, be involved and be a part of dictating our future — our history would suggest that we should involved.

It is through education that we will become an effective player in determining our future; knowledge will empower us to make informed decisions. Knowledge will help us to make good decisions in regard to cleanup issues, long term health

care needs and individual health care issues.

We have been advised by the people who came here from other Superfund sites, to secure this TAG grant and make use of it. EPA has given us the same advice.

Congress established the TAG program in 1986 to help affected communities understand and comment on site-related information, and thus participate in cleanup decisions.

Basic provisions of the TAG program include:

- Grants up to \$50,000 to community groups for hiring technical advisors to help the community understand site-related technical information. Additional funding may be available for unusually large or complex sites.
- The group must contribute 20 percent of the total project costs to be supported by TAG funds. This requirement can be met

with cash, donated supplies and volunteered services.

- The group must prepare a plan for using the funds.
- There may be only one TAG award per NPL site.

This TAG grant will be provided to only one group in the community, and it is my view that the Community Advisory Group is the most appropriate group. The CAG will have to become a 501-C3, non-profit group, which should be no problem, at least that I see. The cost of establishing a 501-c-3, it seems, could be provided up front by the grant. I think it is in our best interest to pursue this resource.

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